

DDA Pesticide Section warns of the danger of illegal pest control operators

Be sure to check applicator's license information at www.state.de.us/deptagri/pesticides/index.htm

It's almost summer at last. Not only do we welcome the beauty summer brings, but we also turn our attention to the millions of little pests that seem to crawl out of every little nook and cranny in our homes and yards. Controlling these pests is not an easy job. Many of us will hire a commercial pesticide applicator and some of us will try to handle the pests ourselves. In either case, caution is urged.

The safest approach to pest control is to hire a commercial applicator who has had the proper training in the use of pesticides. Residents are urged to be wary of illegal pest control operators. Unfortunately, illegal pest control operators are a growing problem across the nation. They pose a threat to people and the environment because they have not had training in pesticide application. Lawn service employees, who cut grass and apply fertilizer, may or may not be licensed pesticide applicators. Before letting anyone apply pesticides to your lawn or home, be sure to check the applicator's license information. Ask to see their license and double check the status of the license at www.state.de.us/deptagri/pesticides/index.htm. All licensed, certified commercial pesticide applicators in Delaware are listed at this site.

Besides training in pesticide use, licensed applicators must carry liability insurance in the event of property damage or personal injury from pesticide use. Unlicensed, non-certified personnel applying pesticides may have no liability insurance and if an environmental cleanup is required, the homeowner may have to pay.

Unlicensed commercial pesticide applicators are subject to a \$2,500 fine (each offense) under Delaware law (**3 Delaware Code**, Chapter 12).

If you are a do-it-yourselfer, take extreme care.

- Read the label first and follow the directions on the pesticide containers completely.
- Homeowners are urged to wear protective clothing and check application equipment for leaking hoses or connections and plugged, worn, or dripping nozzles.

Safety Tips

- Never eat, drink, or smoke while applying pesticides or before cleaning up.
- After applying pesticides, remove your clothes and thoroughly wash your hands, face, and body. Then wash your clothing (separate from the family laundry).
- Each time you use a pesticide, read the directions!
- Work outdoors with good light and ventilation when mixing or loading pesticides.
- Never mix or apply pesticides on windy days.
- Do not mix pesticides, fill your sprayer, or wash your sprayer near any stream, river, pond, lake, well head, storm water or sewer drain.
- If you splash or spill a pesticide while mixing or loading, stop immediately-remove contaminated clothing and wash thoroughly, then clean up the spill.

For more information about pesticide safety and training, please call the Delaware Department of Agriculture at (302) 698-4500 and or check the DDA Pesticide Section website:
<http://www.state.de.us/deptagri/pesticides/index.htm>